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Subject: The Delight of Self-Sacrifice.

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PREACHED BY

HENRY WARD BEECHER.



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HENRY WARD BEECHER.

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# THE DELIGHT OF SELF-SACRIFICE.

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“Even as the son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.”—Matt. xx., 28.

“If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfill ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”—Phil. ii., 1-11.

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You will observe that that which sounds through this passage is the glory of self-renunciation. This is not the vision of a God in the plenitude of power: it is the vision of a God disrobing himself of power. Not the attributes of royalty, but the habiliments of servitude, are the insignia here held forth. All creation is exalted to a rapturous praise of a being who is set forth by the symbols of suffering and self-renunciation.

That which is here uttered (not a dirge but a pæan) by the apostle of our Saviour was also, in the first passage that I read, substantially stated by the Saviour himself. When



they were making the last progress toward Jerusalem, just before his passion and death, the mother, with her sons, drew near, with a secret ambition to exalt James and John (perhaps it was) to the first places—to seats on the right hand and on the left of Christ; and our Saviour, with great gentleness, instructed them—for instruction in this case was rebuke; whereas, the other disciples were exceedingly angry; and to these it was that the Master turned and said:

“Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them; but it shall not be so among you; but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister [not your clergyman—by no means—but your servant]; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your slave [that is full force of the original]: even as the son of man came not to be ministered unto [not to be served], but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.”

There can be no question that the Christian religion has come down to us with a color which it had not in the primitive church, and which it ought not to have; and that it has been so stained through and through with the ascetic element as to make it a totally different thing in the apprehension of men from what the religious spirit and service were to the Old Testament saint, from the spirit of the apostles themselves, and from the normal nature of things.

I declare that the Christian religion is the introduction upon a lower nature of a higher nature, and that it is therefore, in the highest and noblest sense of the word, natural. Men have been afraid to call religious things natural for fear that they should drag them down and degrade them; but the true way is to bring nature higher, and show it as it is, as the organized thought of God, and to make it larger in its sphere, so that we shall no longer think of mere matter when we speak of nature, but include in it mind and emotion and disposition, and the total of a glorious manhood.

I say that religion, instead of being an interpolated thing, a stop-gap, made by reason of man's fall, an episode in the history of creation, is in the nature of things, from eternity to eternity, and expresses the best things of God and the best things of man; and that it bears in itself the highest nobleness and the highest happiness.

The Jewish religion involved, to be sure, penitential elements, and recognized in the experience of life abundant sorrows; but the genius of the religion that was instituted by inspiration through Moses was certainly cheerful and joyous; and the spirit of the Old Testament, while it has its sadnesses, while, in other words, it recognizes the experience of the human race, yet whenever it lifts itself up to the ideal plane where the human race are entitled to live is wonderfully joyous.

The life of Christ also, I take it, is greatly misinterpreted. It involved suffering, and, at the last and great dramatic hour, an awful passion which human thought may not compass nor fathom. And yet, it seems to me, no man can read the life of Christ continuously, from beginning to end, and take in what must have been the movement of the thoughts of such an one as he, going about clothed with double power—power from on high and from on the earth—and doing good, with any other result than that of finding there the fruit of joy. The essential spirit of Christ was not sad, but deeply joyful; and so it is said:

“Who, for the joy that was set before him [that ever hovered over him and lightened his path], endured the cross.”

Joy, supereminent and abounding, floated up the life of Christ upon the under waves; and when, in his darkest hour, he met his disciples, he was not as a sufferer overcome: he was in suffering the unsuffering, if I may so say; for he said to them, when the shadow was on him, “My peace I give unto you.” Now, he that in the extremity of suffering had peace to give to those who were about him was not overwhelmed with any such sense of suffering as we have been wont to attribute to him.

The writings of the apostle are full of pathos and full of earnestness, and they recognize, in the most eminent degree, the conflicts of life; but the very spirit of hope and joy pervades them. They always move with the step of victory. There is nowhere else, in an equal compass, such exaltation or exultation, I think, as is to be found in the writings of the apostles, and preëminently in those of Paul, the sufferer and the rejoicer. I know not where you will find, if you come

into the full spirit of it, a more magnificent instance of it than that which is recorded in the closing words of the eighth of Romans, where he has been speaking of the sufferings of the whole world; where he looks upon the creature delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God, and says, "The whole creation is going on still groaning, and it is still travailling in pain." And then, after reasoning on all the light and darkness in which the world moves, he says:

"What shall we say, then, to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things. Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?"

And now look at this magnificent defiance with which he throws down the gauntlet to every conceivable form of earthly misfortune:

"Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, [and where is there such another magnificent burst of joy and cheer as this?] in all these things [in tribulation, and distress, and persecution, and famine, and nakedness, and peril, and sword] we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded [and now his thought overleaps the bounds of time and earth, and takes in the universe] that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Now, I ask you whether the whole view of the Christian religion, as it is laid down in the New Testament, is not one of joyfulness—whether that is not the preëminent element, the genius, of it. I ask you whether the religious life which has been handed down to us from the church of the mediæval ages is not, after all, so stained through with a sense of melancholy and restriction and loss and narrowness and suffering that the popular impression is that religion, if not morose, is yet moody and melancholy, sad and sorrowful; that its joy lies in the things that are to be in the life which is to come, and not in the thing itself. I ask you whether the



ascetic view has not been preached, and is not still preached, unconsciously, by men who disown it in terms, and who yet make representations of great doctrines in such a way as to impress the minds of their fellow-men with the conviction that to do the things that are noblest, best, divinest, in accordance with the highest law of true manhood, requires great suffering; and that it requires a special dispensation of grace to enable men to do those things, because they are not only so hard, but so painful in the doing.

This ascetic view of religion is false in general, and in particular it destroys its power. It is for the welfare of the race that they should understand not only that the highest line of manhood is possible, but that it is the most redolent of joy. This is a secret which the world ought to have disclosed to it, whatever it may cost. No miner is unwilling to work night and day, if only gold follows his work. The very mother, in the midst of travail and anguish, rejoices, forgets her pain, because a man child is born into the world. No man counts the suffering that is victorious in the end. But it is needful that the world should understand that religion is not a series of sufferings which are in the nature of a price paid for a joy by-and-by, but that it is a revelation of God to this world of that higher law of true manhood which carries with it, now and forever hereafter, the highest happiness of which men are susceptible.

I declare that every single Christian duty laid down carries its own pleasure in it. I declare that if men want to know the sources and secrets of the highest joy they will find them in those very things which are ordinarily esteemed as most difficult and only to be done under a sense of duty—things that men balance, saying, “Shall I deny myself, or be damned? Well, on the whole, I’d rather deny myself. It’s hard, but still it’s better to pluck off my right hand than to go to hell.” And so they consent with themselves to do things that are painful, onerous, bitter, disagreeable in every way, revolting, as they think, to nature; and they do it because they are afraid, if they do not, that by-and-by the settling will be harder than they can bear.

It is preëminently desirable, therefore, that men should

understand that whatever may seem to be the difficulties and pains attending the performance of Christian duties, they carry in themselves, as the fruit of doing them, the very reward of good. They are not so hard as men think they are, and they are not so painful as the devil tempts men to think they are; but they are as full of joy as the tree of life is of apples that are shaken down over the head of the world. It is a misfortune to have it understood that righteousness is sad and painful, and that joy and hilarity are to be sought for only in physical life. It is a misfortune to have it understood that sufferings and tears and mortifications belong to the spiritual life, and that gayety and liberty and joyfulness belong to the fleshly life. It is a slander, and it is a slander that carries detriment and damnation to uncounted thousands.

When our Master stood in the midst of Palestine, looking out upon the currents that were flowing, sometimes north, and sometimes south—the various impulses, the various ambitions, the various lines of endeavor—he saw men fluctuating from right to left, and from left to right, all seeking happiness; and he, as it were, questioned the world and the men that were in it, and found that they were barren of happiness. Power sought it, and power did not find it. Riches sought it, and riches did not find it. Vanity sought it, and it was not in vanity. Men sought it in the flesh, and there it died. Looking at all the ways in which men sought to make themselves happy, Christ stood and said, “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.” All the world’s joy is but a tantalization. He that wants the peace of joy cannot find it in the flesh, nor in the lower social life, nor in the merely intellectual life, but in the realm of the moral life, where true divine manhood inheres. Let him mount there; let him lay the lines of his life according to that higher spiritual wisdom, and he shall find rest unto his soul—for there is a realm in the soul which never hears the tempest, nor feels the thunder-shock; and the very earthquake may



shake and roll every other thing and not disturb the settled peace that God has given to those who know how to retreat to the innermost divine temple of the soul and there find rest in God.

Consider, now, this law of self-devotion, or this law of self-renunciation, if you choose to call it so, or this law of self-sacrifice, or the giving up of yourself for the benefit of others—call it whatever name you please. It strikes everybody that it must be a heroic thing, but a thing which the world cannot be expected to find or to practice. Men look upon it as painful. They look upon it as necessary, but necessary just as surgery is—not because they laugh when they are cut, but because if they are not cut by-and-by they will die; and rather than die they are willing to suffer.

So men say, “Yes, we are willing to deny ourselves, to take up our cross, to serve other men, to use all the power of our being for the happiness and comfort of our fellow-men, looking not at our own things.” The trouble is that they conceive of it wrongly. In the first place they think it is ordering them into a realm of labor, of pain-bearing, and storm-bearing, and they do not understand its genius. Then, in the next place, they say, “One thing I do know practically, and that is, that if a man does not attend to his own business his business will not attend to him. I must look after myself; and when I go over to my shop or my store, and you tell me, ‘Now, look not every man on his own things, but every man on the things of others,’ that is just what we do—and we try to get them too.” Thus they pervert to selfishness the words which teach the largest disinterestedness.

But men say, “Business is business; and a man must take care of himself. The law of self-preservation and of individual responsibility leads him to do this. You must look after yourself or nobody will look after you. Do you tell me that I must live a life of self-renunciation? It is the same as saying that I must seek self-destruction. Society could not stand an hour if that were to be the principle of action.”

Let us, then, consider this a little more at the root.

When you look at the animal life upon the globe in its lowest stage, you will see that the lowest form of animal life has but two substantial functions. One is self-preservation, and the other is propagation. All the lower forms of animal life have but these two substantial functions. That is their law to themselves. They have not the faculty for anything more. Many creations below them have not the faculty even for that; but if you take the lion, the tiger, all beasts that eat and flee or fight, they have talents for these functions; but to organize ideas, or to form communities, is not in them. They have not the aptitudes for such things. The law of the lowest life—the life of mere flesh—is to take care of self. That is the prime end of life in the mere physical realm, and its occupants are not equipped for anything more than that.

As you begin to rise in the development of animal life, a new element comes in—namely, that of congregations or communities. Animals begin, as they are more largely developed, to live together. Now, to live together, in its nature, implies the thinking of one animal or creature of another animal or creature. There must be social equation. In one way or another that must be established. So, in the progressive development of animal life, there comes in something more than self-preservation; there comes in the power of social existence, which implies, more or less, the fitting of one to another, which is a very low form of self-abnegation. That is, we give up some things for the sake of some other things.

So society, in its earliest stages, is formed. Men come together for mutual defense. They augment power. For there must be intestine government, and there must be submission thereto. These things are nascent and crude; but, nevertheless, as compared with the state of the animals below them, the society of the savages in this world is an immense growth toward development.

But as you go still higher, you will find not only that this is true, but that there comes in the social, as distinguished from this animal conservation. There is developed the society life of the household. In other words, even in savage life flowers blossom here and there, in the midst of rudeness and coarse-

ness and cruelties and unutterable degradations. The golden candlestick begins to be set up in the house, and the light of maternal love begins to shine out. There begin to be the seminal forms of the higher life in which thinking for others, caring for others and doing for others, is the mainspring of a person's joy.

In the lower forms of development, in the earlier stages of society, the bulk of the pleasure of the lower animals or creatures in it is physical. To eat, to drink, to sleep, to experience pleasurable sensations of a physical kind, is the highest conception that they can have of happiness. Then they begin to find happiness in the exertion of themselves in war, or in the chase, or in commerce, which feeds another stronger instinct. First, mere physical thrills are pleasures. Then rude strength exerted, and the sense of the superiority of man over man, are pleasures.

But even in this realm there is developed a still finer element—namely, that of heroism. You shall never find the element of heroism in which there is not this inherent quality—that it is not for the person's own self, but for another. It is the man who stands on his own threshold against twenty men, and slays them to defend his household; it is the man who, when the safety of the commonwealth requires some one to go into the gulf, leaps in and perishes; it is the man who stands for his country or for his kind, and has such exaltation of sentiment that he is careless of self or forgets himself—that is the man who is a hero. It is only the man who rises above self and gives himself for others, or for some great cause, that ever knows heroism, and becomes a hero in poem or in history.

As society is further regenerated, we begin to find more and more that the pleasures of men consist in pleasures which they produce in others. There is a low, corrupt form of it in fashionable society, and in politeness even. We speak sweetly to men because it makes them speak sweetly to us. We make men happy because we know that they must pay their debts, and make us happy. This is a low form of, a rude seeking after, an important principle which underlies the very genius of Christianity—namely, that your happiness



comes from making other people happy—from using yourself for the welfare of others; but the essentially heroic nature is shown in generosity, in devotion, in fidelity, in magnanimity.

Even coarse, rude men remember the sensations of a great generosity more than almost any others, as is shown by the way they repeat them and boast of them. Men have a drunken revel; and the wild night rages till the morning dawns, with what they call pleasure; but after all, when one of them goes out at daybreak, somewhat sobered, and hears a cry of distress, and, following it, sees a woman set upon by brutal villains, and thrusts himself, without a question, into the affray, and makes her case his own, and with high conflict and some wounds smites them down, and slays them, and delivers her, a thousand nights of debauch are forgotten, and that one act of heroism, in which he put life and power and everything magnanimously at stake for an unknown person, he never forgets.

Nay, where, if you were to look, would you expect to find the greatest happiness in this world? I think the old miser is happy. Happy? Yes, just as boys are that make music on old tin pans. When I was a boy I drummed on the old meal-chest, and to me it was music that I made; but the word came to me, “Stop that noise!” and I marveled at the want of taste in men with regard to such things.

There are joys of various kinds—joys of avarice, joys of dissipation, joys of ambition, joys of vanity. It is absurd to say that there is no pleasure in these things. If there was not, the whole world would not go after them. But, after all, where is there the most joy? You know just as well as I do that not the most resplendent things, not the things that are the most reported, are the most joy-producing. You know, taking all things together, that there is more joy in home than anywhere else. The mother, singing by her cradle side, does not care that routs and parties are going on in the community. Her babe is more to her than all the pleasures that could be shed upon her from all the resplendent gatherings in the world. And what is her babe to her? A burden. Yes; but it is one of those burdens which are

light. What is it? A yoke of servitude. Yes; but it is an easy yoke. What is her babe to her? A remunerator? It does not even know her. It does not understand a word she says. She carries it in her bosom all night. It eats her. It is her jailer. It shuts her up in the house. It takes her from a thousand habits and accustomed ways of life. Dress no longer seems comely to her. Friendships are all swallowed up in this object of her care and affection. She gives her life to it, making it new day and night. She pours her life out on the most helpless of things that lives on God's globe. And she is the happiest creature! She never seems to herself so happy as when, with her healthy child, she sits, and it croons, and she sings. Her happiness consists in emptying herself, and in pouring everything that is sweet and beautiful and noble in womanhood into this unconscious receptacle—her little child.

Look at the whole household life. When there are six or eight unlicked cubs running about the house there is some racket, and there are some crosses to bear; but is there anything in this world that men look back to so much as to the old home? They remember it for some reasons, and for others; but, after all, with its instructions, with its regulations, with its restraints, with its "No's," with its "You shall's," and with everything else, it is the Eden of a man's memory. And when old age makes men's hands quiver, after they have gone through a long life, they have forgotten almost everything but home. That they remember, even to the moss on the bucket, and to the weather-stain on the old wall; and father and mother live even when God is forgotten, so strong is the impression of the household.

Now, the household is the only place on earth where, regularly, and by the force of nature, men live self-sacrificing and self-renouncing lives. You talk to me of heroism; and what is heroism but a spark from the household, taken and carried out and made into a flame at large in life? What a mother does every day of her life nobody celebrates; but let her do that on a sphere as large as the world's sight, and then she is a heroine. Grace Darling, to save an unknown person, became heroic; but a mother gives herself with a

thousand times more pain-bearing, in obscurity, to save one, two, or three children. It is common; and the simple want of publicity does not make it less heroic. Heroism is cheap. It is so abundant in the family that we do not think of it. Self-renunciation—bold, cheerful, ample, continuous—we see it all the time in the household; we admire it; it enriches our nature; it is magnificent; and if the poet, like Tennyson, can sing it so that all the world hears it, it is heroic. If any one outside of the family does the same thing for his country, it raises the stock of human life immensely. Thus that which is common in the family, outside of the family makes a man a hero.

Who would not, for those he loves, do anything, bear anything, suffer anything? What is there that is hard to bear if one only loves enough? Why is it that men lie still and cannot make headway? Why is it that so many are bound, and cannot make sail? It is because the ocean of love is run out, and they are stuck in the mud of the lower life of selfishness. But when the tide comes back of a noble, generous, loving spirit, which is always self-renunciating and self-sacrificing, then men are lifted up from the shallows on which they are lying, and they make their voyage of life easily.

When, therefore, men carry out into the world-life the words and deeds of the household, they are praised and looked upon as happy. Yea, there is many a selfish, envious, proud, stingy, cold, coarse man, who, looking upon some generous devoted act, says, "My God! if I could only do such a thing as that I should be happy!" O yes, so you would; there is no doubt about that; but you will not do it. Men will not cultivate the moods out of which such actions are developed.

I give these illustrations to show you that the essential nature of self-sacrifice is not pain-bearing; that it is not an impossible thing; that it is an interpretation of the higher nature; that it is following, in this animal sphere, one of the great secrets and principles of eternal manhood, of spiritual life—namely, that they who have learned how to live for others have learned, too, how to live as God lives, and



heaven lives, and the universe lives, and therefore how to live happily. I have illustrated it by calling your attention to the fact that, as in the household life of men God has ordained such living on a low plane, and in a comparatively narrow sphere, the observation of it there will show that the inherent nature of self-renunciation is pleasure, not pain, and that it brings joy, not sorrow.

I do not like to have men misinterpret what is going on before their eyes. I hear men say, "Is it not strange that that dried-up soul should have everything, almost, given to him, in life,—houses, lands, all that heart could wish,—while Kossuth, that heroic man whose name the world will never let die till the memory has perished, is an exile, is living far from his native land and his friends, and is a wanderer?" Let me tell you that your pity is not needed. If I were to go to Italy and search for the happiest man that lives there, probably I should take Louis Kossuth, whose soul is fed on noble thoughts, whose life has been consecrated to sacrifice; because he who knows how to easily give up all has inherited all, on the principle which Christ enunciated when he said of his disciples, that if they gave up everything to follow him, they should inherit all things. He who knows how to serve gloriously is always served gloriously. He that gives from his lower life is paid in the augmentation of his higher life.

You know very well that I do not believe in a technical theology which teaches us that man fell from a high state of perfection: on the contrary, I believe that he began at the bottom, and never had any altitude to fall from; that he has been working his way up, through historic periods, all the time; and that there is a point at which, having been an animal, he becomes a spiritual being. I do not mean to give my faith to the theory that he was ever a brute, absolutely; I do not commit myself to such an idea as that at all; but I do believe that the human race, as a race, began its career on the earth at the lowest conceivable seminal point at which a human race can exist, and that everything that they have gained they have gained by gradual unfolding, evolution and education. Living on the flesh plane, they acted according to the law of self-defense, and everything was for *me*. On

the next higher plane, almost everything was for Me, but something was for You, for the sake of keeping you peaceable with me. On the still higher plane of civility and patriotism and heroism, they lived more largely for others, but mostly yet for Me. But when they came to the spiritual plane, out broke the divine principle, and they lived no longer for the lower animal nature, or for the social nature, with a small distribution of self, nor even for a patriotic sentiment, with a large and more heroic distribution of self; they came into that spirit in which they lived for others.

That is God. It is the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, who, though he was made in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon himself the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, and not only that, but the most ignominious death, the death of the cross. Wherefore God hath highly exalted him. God, by that everlasting decree on which the universe stands; God, by the inscrutable law which runs through all eternity, exalted him—the law that he who gives most is highest, and that he who keeps back most is lowest. He that would be chief, let him be your slave; he that would go up, let him come down—that is the law: not a special and arbitrary enactment of Christianity; not a special and arbitrary duty imposed by the church, but a decree brought into the world first by the Lord Jesus Christ. The race had so far risen, when the fullness of times came, that it was possible to develop higher forms of life in which a new kingdom was to break out with effulgence and glory; and here was a revelation of it. That law is, *Use the whole power of your life for other men*. So you shall harmonize your own life, and fill it with blessedness.

“Take my yoke and my burden,” says Christ; “they are light, and they are easy, and they shall bring rest to your souls.” Live for yourselves, and you fret; live for others, and all goes smoothly. Live for yourselves and you moan, you are dissatisfied, you are despondent, you are filled with pinings and conflicts and jealousies; live for others, give up

all things to God and to mankind, and count yourself but an accumulated force under the law of love, and life will be bright above, and bright beneath, and bright in the eternal future.

And now, to-day, we are going to celebrate, for the last time this summer, and peradventure for the last time on earth, the Lord's Supper. Who may come and take it? To whom is it offered? For whom is it? What is it? It is bread for the hungry that stands here to-day, saying, "I represent God." What is it? It is the crushed cluster in these cups that stand here to-day, saying, "I am Jehovah." It is that which sets forth to men the giving up of all things for others. That is the divine ideal. That is the conception of God, who lives, not to be the center of the universe, having all things flow in, as into a mighty vortex, toward him. God sits throwing out everywhere, like the sun, light and warmth and power; and he represents himself by the loaf and crushed cluster, saying, "As the loaf feeds others and not itself, and fulfills its nature in giving food and strength to others, so do I eternally give myself to others." As the cluster gives its life, its very innermost blood, that others may be cheered, itself being destroyed, but gloriously reappearing in those that are helped, so it symbolizes the nature of the God of all grace and all joy. Oh, how blessed to be God, if that means to be forever, and with infinite circles, joy upon joy—joy, not in the form of abstract raptures, that roll like airs through the atmosphere, but joy by exalting men, by ennobling them, by sanctifying men, by teaching them a nobler manhood, and waiting till they grow up into it by the divine power of inshining, and so making them joyful here preparatory to the outburst of eternal joy there.

Now, who may come to this table? "I was baptized in my youth; my parents were Christians; they brought me up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; I was catechized up and down and crosswise; I know the catechism from end to end, and I believe it—the Westminster Catechism, I mean; and I have always been accustomed to the house of God." It is said that knowledge puffeth up. I do not ask you to come if that is all the reason you have. "But I belong to the true



church. Jesus Christ founded the church, and ordained great officers in it, and empowered them to forgive sins, and I have had priestly remission and absolution; and therefore I have a right to come." If all you have is from the touch of man's hand, however sacred and reverend, I do not invite you to come. I do not give this invitation to a churchman, or to a member of the church; I do not give it to those who are moral; I do not give it to those who respect the services of religion, and mean to do something toward supporting them in the community. But if there be any soul, in the church or out of the church, that has been touched with priestly hands, or that has never been touched with priestly hands, but that believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thinks it is a glorious thing to be God, and do good, and spread joy and goodness throughout the universe—if there be any soul that is kindled in the light of God's inspiration, and says, "I, too, want to live in that way," that soul I invite. But there is much for you to overcome before you can do it; and you must fight the battle for yourself; saying, "If God will help me I will fight that battle." Are there those who say, "I am conscious of my infirmities of temper, and of immoralities of life, but I see what the higher life is, and by the help of God I will live toward it, and will from this hour endeavor to consecrate myself to the welfare of men, as God consecrates himself to my welfare; I will give my life, as far as I know how to give it, for the good of others; I will renounce selfishness and I will embrace benevolence, because it is his command"? Now come and ratify that vow. As you take the bread, and as it gives you strength, determine in yourself that your life shall be as a loaf to others, and that you will give your strength to them. As you take the wine that exhilarates, pray that all the power which is in you may be as courage to the discouraged, and consolation to the disconsolate. If you are willing to consecrate all your power of body and soul to the welfare of your fellow-men, I ask you to come. I ask you not because you are sinless—you are very sinful; not because you do your whole duty—you fall far short of your whole duty: I invite you to come because, realizing your sinfulness, and your imperfect performance of

duty, you are striving to overcome your sins and fulfill your duty ; and I invoke on you the spirit of God ; and if you persevere you will find that you are advancing from class to class. As you rise from the primary school to the academy, from the academy to the college, and from the college to the professional school, so, in the Christian life, if you are faithful, you will advance in the higher way of living for others, until you have become like Christ, and understand more and more of him, and return with larger and larger power of peace and gentleness and goodness, and pour it out on the unlovely and upon the unworthy, and until you have this testimony in yourself : “ By the grace of God I live, not for myself, but for others.” Then, in that spirit, when death comes, it opens the ears to the eternal rapture, it gives to the heart eternal life, and it brings you, with your introduction written in your own soul, into the presence of God and joying angels.

## PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.\*

We rejoice, O Lord Jesus, that by the power of thy name men still are called from death to life, that by faith of thee joy takes possession of sorrow, that hope is more than fear, and that there is victory even in defeat. We rejoice that all the streams of human affairs—the temptations of pleasure, the power of pride, the organized forces of human life—are not so much as the power of thy Spirit; that thou dost still, against the world and against all its seductions, bring forth children unto thyself, redeeming them from thrall, creating in them new hearts, and giving them a new spirit filled with love, with joy, with hope and with patience; that finally thou dost carry them forward to the very end; and that having loved thine own, thou dost love them to the end.

To thy holy care and keeping we commit the beloved ones who have been brought into this household of faith. We ask not that their faith may always be one of light or one of ease, but that thou wilt grant to them the secret of songs in the night, of light inward where there is outward darkness, and strength to endure hardness as good soldiers when thou dost lead them in a strait and narrow way. We pray that their life may not be hid except in Christ. May they shine forth upon the world that which they learn of him. We pray that they may be made fruitful in their spheres of labor. And as thou hast appointed to them severally, grant that they may adorn both the doctrine of Christ and the name of the Saviour, by bearing his Spirit among men.

We pray that thou wilt grant thy blessing to rest upon the great brotherhood; and more and more wilt thou be with every member of this church—with each one in his own personal experiences, in his trials, in his secret, inward, hidden life, known only to God. Grant that there may be breathed upon the very springs of action the sanctifying influences of the divine Spirit.

We pray that thou wilt bless all of us in our household life. More and more may we learn of God by the interpretation of our daily experiences. More and more may our love, our friendship, our life be sanctified, that it may reflect upon us the truths of the eternal world. Grant that all the members of this church, in their outgoing and incoming, in their various and appropriate duties in society at large, may bear in them a true manliness. May they have that manhood which is in Christ Jesus. We beseech of thee that they may have force, and enterprise, and victorious accomplishment in the things whereunto they set their hand. May they be diligent in business and fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. And grant that they may serve thee, not alone in their thoughts in the household and in the church, but in their business, so that everywhere they may be witnesses for Him who loved them, and who gave himself for them. We pray that their spirit may be so guided and so disciplined as that they shall make known to men by their unconscious life, even more than by their words, what is the secret of God with men. We pray

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\* Immediately following the reception of members into the church.



that thou wilt comfort them in any trial which may come upon them.

Be near to any, we beseech of thee, who are sitting in darkness, and in great trouble. May the Lord be their counsellor. And grant that there may be for them, not day and night, but perpetual day; for where thou art no darkness can dwell. Where thou art there can be no weakness. Where thou art is peace which the world never gives, and which the world cannot take away.

Grant, we beseech of thee, that if there come up any trouble, sudden, great, and hard to be borne, they may be strengthened in their emergencies, not to forsake their faith in their Saviour.

Be near to the sick; and be near to those who watch with them, in all the alternations of day and night, with fear. Wilt thou strengthen them day by day; and may their trust in God never fail them.

We pray that thou wilt be with those who are perplexed in business. Be with those whom care rests upon heavily.

We pray that thou wilt be with the Israel of God everywhere. Wilt thou be in the hearts of all thy people continually immovable.

We pray that thou wilt bless the churches that are this day assembled in this city, and in the great city near us, and throughout all our land. We rejoice that there are so many, and that there is so much power in them. If there be such error of thought and teaching as diminishes the power in any, we pray that by thy Spirit they may be guided into a more perfect knowledge of thy truth. Bless even the fragments of truth everywhere, so that whether Christ be preached of contention or in earnest, he may still be made known to man, and blessed to the salvation of their souls.

We pray for those who labor for the promotion of intelligence. We pray for those who are installed in places of great influence. We pray for all presidents of colleges, for all professors, and for all teachers of academies and common schools. We pray for those who write books, and for those who are editing papers, and sending them forth as leaves of the tree of knowledge throughout this land. May they be guided by the inspiration of God.

We pray that thou wilt grant that intelligence may not disjoin itself from virtue, but that knowledge may lead to that righteousness which shall make men perfect before thee.

We beseech of thee that thy kingdom may come, not alone in this favored land, but in all lands. We pray for peace. We pray that those evils from which discontent and discord have sprung may be abated. O Lord, we pray that nations may learn war no more, and that they may cease to live in their animal nature. Grant that men may no longer be as lions, and eagles, and beasts of destruction: make the power of men to reside in their goodness of heart and in their intelligence and virtue. So may the day of ignorance and superstition and violence pass away, and cruelties cease to exist upon the earth. And grant that that great and glorious day may speedily come when Christ shall take to himself his power, and rule over the earth as he rules in the heaven. Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly.

And to thy name shall be the praise, Father, Son, and Spirit. Amen.



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